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## NEWS

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# Naked City

## The Fame Game

BY ROB D'AMICO, FRI., APRIL 7, 2000



Austin resident **Charles Gandy** breathed a sigh of relief when he squeaked by **Don Clark** by a tenth of a percentage point to head to the runoff for the Democratic U.S. Senate race to see who faces the **Kay Bailey Hutchison** juggernaut in November.

"That's why they call me Landslide Gandy," he jokes.

But he stills sighs at the thought of how he fell short of the primary's top vote-getter -- **Gene Kelly**, who took 34% to Gandy's 22.7% -- despite the fact that Gandy had the backing of most of the state's Democratic leadership and all the major newspapers.

Gandy, a former state representative from Mesquite, refers to his opponent as a "guy who's borrowed a name," since Kelly has managed to do fairly well in several elections despite doing little or no campaigning, thanks to his familiar name. Kelly, who hails from Universal City (the San Antonio suburb, not the studios), says that voters recognize his name because it has been on the ballot so many times, not from its identification with the famous actor/dancer.

Despite being pegged as a ballot gadfly by the media, the retired Army colonel says he's got the qualifications to be a U.S. Senator. "I spent 30 years in the military, been a lawyer, administrator, manager, lawyer, counselor, judge, dealt with all kinds of qualifications," he says. "And the U.S. Senate is the way I could best represent the people of Texas."

Gandy says his term as a state representative (1983-85) and his job as director of two bicycle advocacy groups have given him the experience to be a senator. "I have more practical and political experience than my opponent," he says. Among that experience was Gandy's role as lead organizer for the **Tug of Honors**, three massive tug-of-war battles over Town Lake that helped raise money for the **Austin Youth Hostel**.

Many of Kelly's views are strikingly similar to Gandy's. For instance, both candidates advocate better health-care benefits for senior citizens, such as more Medicare prescription benefits. And both support abortion rights and equal pay for women.

Gandy, a consultant who advises governments and others on strategies for "livable communities," also pushes for tighter air and water quality protections. But he focuses most of his attention on campaign finance reform, particularly, he says, since Hutchison has amassed a \$6 million-plus war chest, much of it special-interest money.

"That's a reflection of her being on the wrong side of so many issues," Gandy says. "When you protect polluters they give you contributions. When you give special attention to people, they give you contributions ... I want to fix a polluted system."



*Charles Gandy*

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vulnerable," he says. "Campaign finance reform, health care, Social Security, and the environment are issues she's on the wrong side of."

Gandy adds that he has the support of many Democrats, including former opponent Clark. "Most Democrats think I would be a better spokesperson against Hutchison. ... They are energetic about the prospects of giving Kay a run for the money in the fall and returning the state to a two-party system," he says.

Gandy says he is a serious candidate who campaigns hard, while he has only seen Kelly at one political forum. Kelly counters, "He selects his forums, I select mine. I get out to where I think my word and voice will be heard in the most efficient manner."

It remains to be seen whether Gandy can overcome Kelly's continuing edge in name recognition across the state. Kelly is confident he'll prevail, even though the media once again is counting on him to lose. "I read the papers and that's what the papers indicate," he says. "They have a long history of picking losers, while I am backed by the rank-and-file Democrats in the state."

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